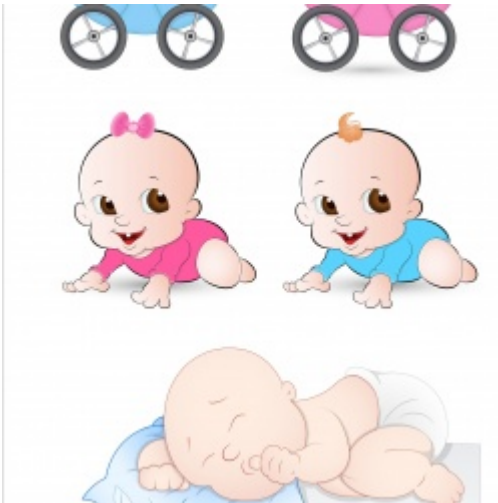


# Baby By The Book: Can You Read Your Way Through Parenting?



By Ana-Marija Dolaskie — February 15, 2018



Storyblocks

Just like pretty little snowflakes, no babies are alike. I knew this while I was pregnant, and I sure as heck know it now, as we are enjoying our almost 5-month old infant.

There are countless books on babies: from month-to-month pregnancy guides, to labor and delivery, parenting, behavior issues, sleeping, feeding, and much more. Information overload on what to expect while you're expecting can be overwhelming, so I tried to read what I was curious about, but I mostly avoided all the different parental advice books.

"I don't need a book, we will just figure it out," I would say to my husband. I was confident in my choice.

Until baby came.

I knew I needed help in some areas, beyond what the 3 a.m. guessing game could deliver, so I ate my piece of humble pie and read up on the *science of baby*. The following are things we learned from [The Baby Whisperer By Tracy Hogg](#). [1]

## **Sleeping**

Babies sleep. *A lot*. At least that's what everyone said while we were expecting. What they didn't say is that babies actually don't sleep that much. And they definitely don't sleep when you think they'll sleep. When our son turned 3 months and was still waking up every two hours to nurse, I began to wonder if there was a better way we can all get some sleep. The baby whisperer had

insight I never dreamed would work, but it did.

First thing we needed to figure out is whether or not our baby was waking out of hunger, or habit. According to the book, if a baby wakes arbitrarily during the night, it is most certainly always hunger (given that he isn't soiled, sick, or going through a growth spurt). The solution? Feeding more during the day — especially before bedtime.

But, if baby wakes around the same time each night, it is most certainly out of habit. Breaking this habit can be hard, but not impossible. Hogg explains a method that may have many parents' jaws hitting the floor but I will say this: ***it worked — and amazingly so***. The method is called [Wake To Sleep](#).<sup>[2]</sup> In short, knowing that your baby will wake up around 3 a.m. each night without needing to feed, make it a point to wake up 30 minutes before that and go into his/her room. Lightly rouse your baby (rub his back, make shushing sounds, or tickle the feet) and before he begins to wake, gently ease him back into the next stage of sleep. Sounds crazy, right? What you're essentially doing is waking him ever-so-slightly first, to break his habit of waking the same time each night. If you do this consistently for a few nights, the habit will be broken — as you've helped your baby successfully transition from one sleep cycle to the next (remember, babies' sleep cycles are usually 30 to 40 minutes long). The same method works for naps too, especially if your baby's naps are shorter than 40 minutes.

I'm happy to announce our son sleeps between 10 and 12 hours per night, only waking once to feed.

## Feeding to Sleep

One of our biggest problems at bedtime was that our almost 4-month-old could not fall asleep without nursing. Hence, we had absolutely no bedtime routine, other than "hoping he won't wake up during the transfer from the rocking chair to his bed." This was a disaster, since 8 times out of 10 he did wake up, and would resist sleep. So I'd have to start the process again, nursing him to the point of milk coma. Funny thing is, I thought this was just how it would be until he was done breastfeeding. After reading that babies are capable of falling asleep on their own under the right environments — and that they actually crave falling asleep and staying asleep — I was determined to take a new approach.

Putting baby down sleepy but awake is crucial in teaching him to do the rest on his own. A baby who falls asleep independently not only sleeps more soundly, but can also go back to sleep independently, without much help from mom and dad (on most nights, anyway).

The first few nights were filled with resistance, (this is **not** the Cry It Out method) but after a week, our son learned that his bed is a safe place, one perfect for a good sleep. Establishing a bedtime routine was key, so he always knows what comes after a bath, a feed, and a book. This was perhaps the hardest thing we've ever done as parents, and I questioned the process often. But a single line in the book made it all worth it:

*"Do not feel bad for your child. You're teaching him to be an independent sleeper, and that is the greatest gift of all."*

## **Reading Your Baby's Cues**

If you can't read your baby's cues, none of the above will ever work. Babies give us pretty clear signs of what they want, long before they erupt in tears. It's hard to be on the lookout all the time, but when baby is fussy, having a routine takes the guess work out of what the problem may be. A yawn after being awake for more than an hour isn't just a gesture; it's a clear sign that it's time for a wind-down and a nap. Don't push your baby to the limits by ignoring cues until the very last minute, when baby is in tears.

## **Routine**

I used to think "baby will be on *our* schedule." And boy was I wrong. Babies *crave* routine — this isn't debatable. And they rely on us as parents to provide it. Veering off from time to time is absolutely OK (*hey, we all have lives*), but sticking as close to a daily routine as possible and never skipping naps makes for a happy, well-rested baby.

*Happy baby, happy mama.* And yes, it took my reading a baby book to really understand that.

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### **Links**

[1] [https://www.google.com/aclk?sa=l&ai=DChcSEwiC34DIwKrZAhWEusAKHV-pBlwYABAJGgJpbQ&sig=AOD64\\_2VrRLxKmJO4AiN0WjK-DfKr-X0SA&ctype=5&q=&ved=0ahUKEwigoPrHwKrZAhVQYK0KHYZDCoQ9aACCDc&adurl=](https://www.google.com/aclk?sa=l&ai=DChcSEwiC34DIwKrZAhWEusAKHV-pBlwYABAJGgJpbQ&sig=AOD64_2VrRLxKmJO4AiN0WjK-DfKr-X0SA&ctype=5&q=&ved=0ahUKEwigoPrHwKrZAhVQYK0KHYZDCoQ9aACCDc&adurl=)

[2] <https://www.babysleepsite.com/sleep-training/wake-to-sleep-help-baby-short-naps/>